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The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

Theodore O. Wedel

The Mystery of Time

James H. Laird • Christian Love

W. H. Hudnut, Jr. • The High Responsibility

Mervin M. Deems • Full Courage Now

J. M. Stapleton, Jr. • The Power of God

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JOHN S. BONNELL • FAITH HEALING: FRAUD OR FACT?

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The Pulpit

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PULPIT POST

Agrees with Sermon

SIR: Congratulation to you on your article "Present Your Bodies as a Living Sacrifice" (Mar.).

I do not know the Rev. Ichiro Akishige personally, but judging from his article he must be a very fine Methodist minister.

I appreciate his frank writing about immorality of some American soldiers (officers no exception) and Japanese girls. The fact that he originally preached the sermon in English for English speaking people at an American air base increases my admiration.

I agree with his statement, "Our Japanese Christians do not have the custom of drinking and smoking." Christians are in Japan different people. They are those who have experienced the joy of salvation, the joy of becoming new in Christ Jesus.

Incidentally, I am the first Japanese citizen to become pastor of an all Caucasian Methodist Church in America. It is the Mandell Methodist Church in Chicago.

DANIEL K. SHUDO
Mandell Methodist Church
Chicago, Ill.

This Is Why?

SIR: Dr. Horton's article "The R
vival of Interest in Religion" (Ja
gives considerable support to th
who believe that the revival did
just "happen." He states that "atte
ance at church has improved in ra
to the increase in membership." T
fact is that attendance has far o
stripped growth in membership.

In 1950, 57 per cent of all ad
Americans belonged to religious
stitutions. In 1955 this percentage w
60.9, an increase of 3.9 per cent. In t
same period adult worship attenda
increased from 38 per cent in 1950
49.6 per cent in 1955, an increase
11.6 per cent.

We hope that the Religion in Ame
can Life program has had somethi
to do with the phenomenal increase
church attendance. It is more th
mere coincidence that attendance
worship began to gain significantly
1950 following the initiation of
RIAL program a few months before

STANLEY G. MATTHEWS
Director, Public Relations
Religion in American Life, Inc.

(Continued on page 28)

The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

VOLUME XXVIII | MAY 1957 | No. 5

Memo:

APPARENTLY my homiletical angel can't be too subtle when he wants to get something across to me. Even the ton-of-brick tactic doesn't always crash through. How often, for instance, have I been startled by the sharpness and sophistication of a regular congregation before which I had wondered whether I oughtn't to tone down some of my most aspiring prose or level up some of my theological valleys? Well, just that often has my arrogance been stabbed through the heart—and just that often have I heretofore missed the lesson in the event.

In the happy days when I preached regularly in rural churches I ventured from time to time a sermon which had had some acceptance in the Manhattan parish or on a university campus, but which I feared might be strained and artificial in the country. And every time I entertained the snobbish thought, so help me I would get comments from members of the little congregations that showed an alertness to allusion, a theological currency that put both me and the larger urban congregations to shame.

If that happened once it happened a dozen times. I have worried about whether a particular sermon might be too up-town for a down-town congregation, or too down-town for an up, or too collegiate for a suburban church, or too seminarian for a college. There never was a question of thinking down or talking down or watering down. Like every preacher, I was trying to allow for regional, sociological, cultural variations among congregations, the fascinating variety within the church to which one adjusts approach and development.

Then, one week this spring, I preached on Sunday to students in the chapel of a state university and on the next Wednesday to shoppers and office workers at a noonday service in another city. Up to the time I stepped into the university pulpit I was planning to preach a sermon long bubbling in me but never yet brought to decanting. At the last minute, though, my courage failed me and I preached a thoroughly pre-tested opus. I was afraid the tough one wasn't ready; I was afraid it was still too technical, that it assumed too much, that it was too academic even for the academy. And then, three days later I found myself preaching it full strength and unchanged to harried, hurried townspeople in a brief mid-day service. And not a thing was lost. The sermon seemed to me to be an unfortunately involved discussion of the theological and the psychoanalytic issues which are forcing radical reconstruction in the idea of what the Christian life is. Yet men and women who had just stepped in off the street reacted to the all-to-bookish offering positively, gratefully, with real discernment.

The point is not that the preaching in this case was clearer or more persuasive than the preacher knew. (Alas!). The point is that for the umpteenth time the preacher had the fact forced on him that most contemporary congregations are at least as hep as the minister on most subjects, and more on many. And from the sound of much preaching today, this confessing preacher is not the only one who needs the constant reminder of the maturity and sophistication of congregations everywhere.

By what arrogance have we homileticians assumed that the whole crisis in sermonic communication would yield itself only to our improved literary and vocal techniques? With theology becoming at once more biblical and more worldly—more doctrinal at the core but with its rim taking in everything—preachers have worked harder and harder at "communicating" all this, breaking it down, simplifying, illustrating, "making it meaningful" as we say. All that is well and good, if we will always remember that another process is going on too: the technical familiarization, the theological and cultural sophistication of the congregations. We will continue to forget that only at our peril. In many places the congregation working its understanding up has passed its preacher still trying to get his sermons down.

Too many congregations are capable of "getting" more than we are giving. The issues that really bother them are deeper than the issues we are troubling ourselves with homiletically. The general comprehension outruns too much of the development of our argument. The ministry no longer has the educational drop on the laity. We, who once upon a time could count on superior schooling to have advanced our knowledge beyond the congregation's can't bank on that anymore. Everybody's education has caught up, and ours hasn't always kept up. It is not just that there are more Ph.D.'s in more pews everyday: the significant thing for the preacher is that thanks to books and television and movies and records *everybody* knows a great deal about everything now. The preacher today faces keener, more knowledgeable people than ever before. To talk to them and not just at them, he must know the world as well as he knows the Word. His worries should be about the depth of his understanding, the breadth of his own field of vision. No matter how deep or how wide his preaching goes, his contemporaries will be there ahead of him, waiting.

T. A. G.

By John Sutherland Bonnell

FAITH HEALING

WE are witnessing today a nationwide revival of interest in faith healing. We read of it in newspaper and magazine articles. We listen to its strident appeal on radio networks. We view it on our televisions. Here are the actual words of one newspaper advertisement of a television healing program: "Actual miracles happening before your eyes. Cancer, tumors, goiters disappear. Crutches, braces, wheel chairs, stretchers discarded. Crossed eyes straightened. Caught in the healing line as they occurred before thousands of witnesses."

In the south and the far west canvas tents holding ten to twenty thousand persons are crowded nightly by an emotion-swept mass of people. Little attempt is made to exemplify the pattern set by Jesus when he said to many of those whom he had healed: "See that you say nothing to any one." Today the motto is: "Tell everybody of this."

Cults Become Big Business

Individual evangelist-healers in some instances have made their movements into big business with many ramifications and a gross intake of from $500,000 to $3,000,000 a year. The aftermath of some of these missions has been pitiful. They have left in their wake many disillusioned and despairing people who found that the temporary improvement produced by emotional excitement did not last. Undoubtedly, as in all such instances, there were cases of illness improved or cured. So great is the power of faith that it will produce results at times under the most unpromising conditions.

Just as I was preparing this manuscript, a letter came to my desk from a woman eighty-six years old who had been prayed for by a highly publicized healer. He held out such extravagant hopes that, when none of them could be fulfilled, she sank into despair. Now she writes that she is praying to God to let her die.

What makes the situation so confused and complicated for many Christian people is the fact that these healing evangelists, however mistakenly, are dealing with a spiritual force that is undoubtedly real. Faith, especially if it be linked with God, releases healing energies that powerfully affect body, mind and spirit.

The Christian church itself must bear a measur of blame for the present situation. For decade many pastors have stubbornly refused to recogniz the importance of spiritual healing. What had bee one of the central ministries of the church in apos tolic days, and at times since then, has been neg lected or ignored. Consequently, the healing cult have moved into the vacuum that was created.

Medical science too has its share of responsibility During the first quarter of the 20th century man medical schools were dominated by a spirit of ma terialism. This point was stressed recently by well-known physician of Philadelphia who, in a address to ministers and doctors, said: "When went to medical school forty years ago, our anatom teacher in his first lecture said: 'Man has a soul an a body. That's enough for the soul. For the nex four years I shall be talking to you about th body.' " The physician added: "He lived up to hi promise. We heard of nothing but the body."

There were also those, of course, who would no even admit the existence of the soul, who believe that man is wholly a creature of his natural environ ment, living in a mechanistically determined un verse. Today all this is largely changed. I reca hearing some fifteen years ago an address given a the New York Academy of Medicine in which prominent physician referred to the spiritual ele ment in man and added: "There is something her above and beyond the test tube which must com back into the relationship between the patient an the physician." That "something above and beyon the test tube" is freely recognized today by the bes accredited medical science.

Doctors and Ministers Cooperate

One of the practical evidences of this change seen in the permanent arrangements that have bee made at the New York Academy of Medicine for th fullest possible cooperation between the clergy an doctors. Seldom has this newer viewpoint been ex pressed with such clarity and forthrightness as i the words of Dr. Henry Asbury Christian, for man years a teacher in Harvard Medical School. He said "The physician will always need the support of true religion. A simple faith in God and in his way should emanate from all true physicians. If he be lieves not, this will be impossible. The believin

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JOHN S. BONNELL *is pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, and nationally known director of religious radio programs.*

FRAUD OR FACT?

ıysician can often bring into perfection a cure not herwise attainable. There is no place in this pro-ssion for the agnostic or the atheist."

Pastors, especially in their ministry to the sick, e at close range the work of physicians. One often onders if doctors themselves realize the tremen-ous psychological and spiritual impact made in ıe sickroom by the personality of the physician, pecially when he is a man of faith. In many cases have seen the light of hope dawn on the faces of ear ones in a home and have sensed the burden of ıxiety lifting from their minds when those magical ords were uttered: "The doctor is here." One of ıe greatest institutions that God ever created is ıe family physician. He comes into the home not a stranger but as a family friend, known and ved by all. A fine illustration of this type of service its best is seen in Sir Thomas Browne, the 17th ntury English physician and author of *Religio edici.* He wrote: "Oftentimes when I go to visit a ıtient, I forget my profession and call upon God r his soul."

In Protestant seminaries all across the United ates prospective ministers are being trained to ilize the immense resources of faith in their min-ry to the sick. They are instructed also on how st to co-operate with physicians and surgeons. In case is it suggested that they should try to re-ace the trained physician in dealing with the sick ıt rather to cooperate with him and to supplement s efforts with the undoubted resources of religion. ıere is as much difference between the disciplined ıd responsible efforts of a trained pastor who is aling with the sick and the activities of commer-al, sensational healers as there is between a ained physician and an African witch doctor.

Christian Use of Faith

At this point the question may well be raised: ow are we to distinguish between a misuse of faith aling and a truly Christian employment of it? ıe of the unfailing earmarks of untrustworthiness this field is the refusal of the "healer" to submit y of his so-called "cures" for medical examina-n. One competent investigator declares that he uld not find one of the leading and much pub-ized "healers" who was willing to submit a case a medical board. This is in striking contrast to e methods employed at the Shrine of Lourdes in France. There, no case is claimed as a healing that has not been first passed on by a board of competent doctors who represent various religious creeds. Many Protestant ministers here and in Great Britain work closely with physicians.

It is a mistake to differentiate, as some are now doing, between so-called "divine healing" and medical healing. All healing is divine healing. Medical science and true faith healing are both of God. God is not more active in so-called spiritual healing than he is in any other mode of combating sickness. Physicians are truly God's agents of healing, whether or not they acknowledge this fact. In the latter case, their situation may be akin to that of King Cyrus, the Persian, who was a pagan. To him came the word of God by the lips of the prophet Isaiah: "I girded you, though you do not know me." There are not a few physicians who are girded by God but have not acknowledged him.

God's Agent against Disease

It is inspiring to think of the great pioneers in the realm of medical research: Pasteur, the discoverer of microorganisms, as great in faith as he was in science; Lord Lister with his antiseptic surgery; Sir James Young Simpson discovering chloroform; Jenner and his smallpox vaccine that saved literally millions of lives; Alexander Fleming with penicillin and the various discoverers of other antibiotic drugs. So the record runs right down to the present day with the Salk serum for poliomyelitis. Truly all of these, as agents of God, have driven back the frontiers of disease and death.

What has been true of medicine is true also of surgery. We see the surgeon opening the chest of a patient, performing a most intricate operation directly on the pulsing heart, removing diseased arteries and replacing them, and giving hope of renewed health and activity to patients who to all appearances were doomed to lifelong invalidism. The ophthalmic surgeon, by an operation of unbelievable delicacy, gives sight to the blind, and the orthopedist in a crippled children's hospital molds and corrects poor twisted spines and limbs so that these little victims will not be doomed, frustrated and lonely, to watch with envious eyes their more fortunate comrades at play. What are these but agents of God bringing hope and healing

(Continued on page 10)

God's Love Illumines
Man's Eternal Pilgrimage

The Mystery of Time

By T. O. Wedel

Job 14:1-3.

SURVEYING human life in a moment of thoughtfulness, Job casts his eye both at man and at God and says:

> "Man that is born of a woman
> is of few days, and full of trouble.
> He comes forth like a flower, and withers;
> he flees like a shadow, and continues not.
> And dost thou open thy eyes upon such a one
> and bring him into judgment with thee?"

The mystery of time has puzzled the wise men of all ages. Past, present and future. We deal with these tenses as we study grammar, and find mystery in the fact of human language. Language, however, is a mirror of life. Reflect upon the mystery of living time, and it becomes awesome indeed. Where can you put your hands upon time? The past—where is it? In the storehouse of memory? Yes, so we may suppose. But is memory real? I can recall, for example, rather vividly the slightly superfluous heat of August days in Washington. But the memory is no substitute for an oil-burningg furnace in January. Nor is memory confined to the pleasant experiences of life. If memory were real, we might be compelled to live over again life's tragedies and pain. Has not the past, therefore, despite its joy as well as sorrow, blessedly found rest in the abyss of nothingness?

Jesus Offers Wise Counsel

As for the future—we dream and plan, and even cast our private horoscopes. But has that future any more reality than does the past? Men consult fortunetellers to learn the secrets of the future. But do many of us really want to know what our future has in store for us? A few incipient millionaires might enjoy the prospect, but the rest of us, I sure, would prefer to be spared itemized account of the burdens and trials which lie ahead. "Do be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble sufficient for the day," said Jesus. And he sp wise words. As for living in a world of dreams nonexistent future as if it were real—that way m ness lies. Literally so. Our mental hospitals are fi with pitiful men and women who have fled from anxieties of the present into the fantasy-world dreams.

But if we cannot live in memory, and dare live in romantic dreams of tomorrow, there is the present. This at least should be real and ca ble of being grasped. But is it? Hold it in y hand, if you can. In the very moment of graspi it too is gone. It is the fraction of a second betw two ticks of a clock. The present too turns out be a mystery.

Nor is the mystery of time a topic which can left to philosophers. It is the very stuff of hun living. You and I cannot escape life in time. look at our past. Here and there we see islands happiness. But they are gone and cannot be res rected. And surrounding those happy memo are the other memories—memories of shame wrongdoing, of neglected loves, broken friendsh ambitions unfulfilled, dreams turned into disi sionment. We carry burdens of guilt. We may co our guilt with forgetfulness, but it is there, awaits only the oblivion of death or the mira of God's forgiveness. The future, in turn, is from our sight—blessedly so. We must, each on us for himself, shoulder the responsibilities of in the present—here and now.

And as we face the present, one fact su stands forth clear and bare. We are ourselves c tures of time. We, like the fleeting moments wh we call the present, are here today and gone morrow. "Man that is born of a woman," so r the opening verses of our text, "is of few days full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues n Nor do these verses out of the Book of Job st alone. Literally scores of passages from the B echo Job's insight. "Our years come to an end a sigh," says the familiar 90th Psalm. "Wha your life? For you are a mist that appears fo little time, and then vanishes," says the Epistl St. James. Or listen to Jesus, addressing a rich r who had presumed to forecast for himself a fut of worldly ease: "Fool, this night your soul is quired of you; and the things you have prepa whose will they be?"

Theme Song of the Ages

The brevity of human life, and the indignity that brevity, is the theme song of the serious poe of the ages. There exists no better proof of the dom of Shakespeare than the echoes of our m ing's text to be found on almost every page wrote:

> We are such stuff as dreams are made on
> And our little life is rounded with sleep.

THEODORE O. WEDEL *is a canon of Washington Cathedral in the nation's capital and warden of the College of Preachers, a cathedral institution devoted to post-ordination of the clergy of the Episcopal Church. Canon Wedel taught in colleges and universities for a number of years before being ordained to the ministry of the Episcopal Church. He holds degrees from Oberlin College and Harvard and Yale universities.*

And if ever you should be puzzled to know why Christianity conquered the culture of ancient Greece and Rome, listen to the wail of the poets of that resplendent age:

> Setting suns shall rise in glory
> But when little life is o'er
> There's an end of all the story
> We shall sleep, and wake no more.

That ancient brilliant world had no answer for the tragedy of time. That is why pagans became Christians. They heard the voice of the Christ saying: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live," and they entered the new world of the Christian faith. That ancient world can teach us much. It had faced the mystery of time and knew its sad refrain. The simple fact that no earthly pleasure endures; that even human love, for all its clinging, must face an end; that the pride of man, of emperors and kings, or clowns and beggars, is, in final view, vanity of vanities—this is the bitter drop in all world-seeking happiness.

Time and God Give Judgment

Nor is the brevity of life the only problem which man faces as he deals with the mystery of time. It is man's peculiar fate that while he shares with the flowers of the field his littleness and his brief span, he, alas, *knows* his littleness. Even more, he feels himself responsible for what he does with the mystery of time. He bears the burden of memory. He stands in dread of the future. He walks in the present under the lash of conscience. He cannot live and die as can the flowers of the field or the animals of the forest. He stands under judgment. He cannot drift with the tide, and enjoy the passing hour as if there were nothing beyond. "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." That slogan sounds attractive. But no man yet has been really able to live by it. For man has that within himself which poisons the mere pleasures of the senses. No alcoholic can boast that he is really happy, nor the man who makes sexual lust his god, nor the worldling who dreams of nothing except money in the bank. Man is not an animal.

As the poet describes our human situation:

> We look before and after,
> And pine for what is not:
> Our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught.

Men and women who try to live their lives outside the bounds of faith in God ask questions on occasion of us who call ourselves Christians. "Prove to us," they say, "the existence of your God." How futile, however, are logical arguments for our belief! Is not our safest answer simply to point to the unbeliever's own inner state? Whence comes his discontent, his hunger for satisfactions which the passing show of worldly vanities cannot yield? Might it be true that man is a pilgrim, not merely in time, but of eternity? His discontent might thus be the token within him of a Father's yearning over a prodigal son's return—a homesickness of the soul. God proves his existence in the heart of man himself. He it is who has set bounds to man's self-worship in order to bring man to an eternal abiding place.

Man, so we have said, cannot escape the tragedy of time. He cannot escape into the past. He cannot dream his way into a utopian future. He stands under judgment in the present. Every day, every hour, every moment of his life, he fashions his own destiny. He, the creature of time, bears the burden of time.

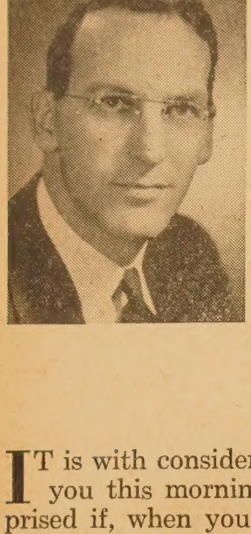
But seen aright, in the perspective of faith in God, this—and precisely this—is man's greatness and man's glory. Listen to the closing verse of our text: Man, so run the words of Job, "comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not." And then, addressing God, Job says: "And dost thou open thy eyes upon such a one and bring him into judgment with thee?"

Can you sense the wonder of that text? There exists no proof of God's existence which can compare with this insight of the Bible. God's judgment, the very thing which burdens our life in time, is God's love. He would not judge if he did not care. We are, indeed, like the flowers of the field. We are of few days and full of trouble. We are victims of the tragedy of time. But the very fact that we are conscious of our burden is proof of the care and love of the Creator of time, its Lord and its Redeemer. This world, with its memories of guilt, and dread of the future, is not our final home. Anxiety is the stuff of our mortal life. But anxiety is the gift of God. It is the mark and sign of our being lost children of a heavenly Father. We are not masters of fate. Our fate is in Another's hands. The tragedy of time is not ours to carry alone.

The Father's Protecting Care

The brevity of life is already proof of eternity. The guilt of our past can be laid upon Him without whose love there could be no sense of guilt in the first place, without whose care there could be no sting of conscience, no fear of the dark, no dread of the future. Ours merely to trust, and to repent, and to obey, and to walk in faith one step at a time. We can live in the present, held safe by everlasting arms. God will take care of past and future. Jesus spoke divine words of comfort when he said: "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. . . . Your father knows that you need these things."

Historians will some day write of the events of these months as having taken place A.D. 1957. Can we take that designation seriously as Christians? For it means *anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord. Each coming year will be, despite its inevitable tragedy and pain, literally a year of our Lord, as have been, in the eyes of faith, all the years since the dawn of time. The God of time will have his own in his keeping and prepare for them, whate'er betide on the plane of mortal life, mansions in an eternal home. May you and I be given the faith to walk bravely into the darkness of days yet unprophesied, our hands in God's hands and our feet on his paths of peace.



Christian Love

By James H. Laird

IT is with considerable uneasiness that I come to you this morning. I would not have been surprised if, when your good pastor proposed to you that he and I exchange pulpits, some of you had objected and politely said you did not care to see it done. For when a white man presumes to preach to those of darker skins and then on the subject, "Christian Love," he is on exceedingly dangerous ground. There may well be some here this morning who are tempted to say, "Physician, heal yourself. Go learn what Christian love means and then come back." I think I can understand such an attitude and I would be slow to blame one who felt that way.

Standing here I remember the names of towns that have been in the news these past months—Montgomery, Alabama; Tallahassee, Florida; Clay, Kentucky; Clinton, Tennessee; Atlanta, Georgia. But prejudice is not just a regional problem; it is a human problem. I think of this city of ours, Cincinnati. And I remember that shortly after World War II a girl in this city won an essay contest centered upon the theme, "What would be the most appropriate punishment for Adolph Hitler?" The thesis of this girl's essay was that the most appropriate punishment for Adolph Hitler would be to put him in a black skin and make him live the rest of his life in America. What deep indignities to the human spirit she must have suffered to bring her to such a conclusion!

Binding Fellowship

It is said of Count von Zinzendorf that he always prefaced his sermons by saying, "I'm not fit to preach." I share his sentiments and particularly do I feel it this morning. But I have been emboldened to speak and that for three reasons. First, you have invited me to do so, and surely under the circumstances your invitation is an expression of Christian love. Second, I preach not only to you but to myself also. Third, the complexion of our skin is incidental and unimportant in God's sight. Primarily this morning, I come not as a white man to speak to those who are not, but as a minister of Jesus Ch to speak to disciples of the same Lord. Greater th the sins that separate us is the fellowship wh binds us together in him.

With this in mind, let us look for a while at Ch tian love, for when one looks at the state of r relations in our land this seems most needful.

The first thing to notice about Christian lov that it is of divine origin. Our faith calls upon us love others not because they are really lovable because they and we are the objects of God's lo The New Testament is very clear that Christ love is a response to a divine initiative and not an intrinsic human worth apart from God. Thus read in the first epistle of John: "Beloved, if God loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . . love, because he first loved us."

As we look at another person or group of peo we may see all kinds of reasons why we would l to shun them—they may be ugly, uncultured, pre diced, unkind, arrogant, intolerant, abusive, sn bish, hypocritical, proud. And yet in the face of New Testament every one of those reasons, and a other objectionable human quality we can nam is irrelevant as a reason for disregarding the div command to love. "A new commandment I give you," said our Lord, "that you love one anoth even as I have loved you." We are to love others imitation of Christ's love, not because they are p sonally attractive, but because they are fellow cr tures of God for whom he has expressed eter concern in Christ.

From a religious point of view one is forced admit there is no virtue at all in loving those w love us. A mutual admiration society may be ple ant for the participants but its religious value is Our Lord observed, "If you love those who love y what reward have you?" After all, did you ever to dislike some one who likes you? It is extrem difficult. By their very liking us they confirm good opinion of ourselves and thus establish the selves in our eyes as persons of extraordinary go judgment and common sense. They are discerni discriminating people when they like us and cannot help liking them. But what virtue is th in that? They bolster our egos and we like it. S this is a far cry from Christian love.

Someone—was it Evelyn Underhill—said Christian task is "to love the unlovable into lov

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JAMES H. LAIRD *preached this sermon to his own congregation, the Mariemont Community Church of Cincinnati, Ohio, a week after he had delivered it in Zion Baptist Church when he and Zion's pastor exchanged pulpits. Dr. Laird is a graduate of Boston University, with the degrees of S.T.M. and Ph.D., and an ordained Methodist minister.*

ess." It is only as we clearly perceive God's love r us that we shall accept such a challenge, grate- lly endeavoring to show to others a love such as e has shown toward us.

Forgiving Love

A second thing about Christian love is that it is rgiving love. "Be kind to one another," wrote the uthor of the letter to the Ephesians, "tender- earted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ rgave you." Here again we see that the motive for hristian love is God's action in Christ, and we are eminded that what God has done for us we should for others. The church has been depicted as "the ommunity of the forgiven and the forgiving." As a ortrayal of the ideal this is commendable; as a pic- ure of the actual it leaves much to be desired, yet ven here it is half right. It was indeed out of for- veness that the church came, and in the practice forgiveness it can find a charter for the future.

Surely we all stand in need of forgiving love. If ie ancient injunction were obeyed, "Let him who without sin be the first to throw stone," the odern sinner would go unscathed as of old. I ave never heard of a church that reached such a ate of perfection that it could omit from the ord's Prayer the phrase, "Forgive us our tres- asses." And I never expect to hear of such a church. Ve pray for forgiveness because we need to be for- ven. God knows our need and meets our need, pecting that as we have been forgiven so shall we rgive. Indeed, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount mediately following the Lord's Prayer suggests at if we will not forgive, then we cannot know the perience of forgiveness.

The alternative to forgiveness should bring us to e its necessity. Paul points out in his famous pas- ge on love in I Corinthians 13 that love is not sentful. The person who refuses to forgive *is* re- ntful. Dr. Frank Laubach's recent rendering of is verse says of love, "It does not nurse hurt feel- gs." How easy it is to feel sorry for ourselves; to come embittered, to pile up resentment upon re- ntment until the burden well nigh crushes us. God ows people give us sufficient provocation for re- ntment. They are frequently thoughtless and un- nd. But what good does resentment do?

I had a parishioner once who was a very fine man. She gave $40,000 to the building fund of r church. She was a lovely person! Seriously, her ancial gift was but one evidence of the generous irit that was hers. One day she was engaged in nversation with an acquaintance who was griping out the treatment the latter had been accorded her parents. When she had finished, my friend mply said, "Personally, I have found life too short r bitterness." And she poured into life a sweetness spirit that blessed those who knew her.

Yes, we all need love, especially those who hate. ychologists tell us that the man who hates others ally hates himself. Yet he cannot bear his own te and so he projects it upon others. That man eds to be loved, to be reassured of his own values he can love himself, and be led from there to love s neighbor as he loves himself.

A third thing about Christian love is that it will not let us delude ourselves—Christian love is painfully realistic. Thus we read in the New Testament, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar." The Bible will not let us lounge undisturbed in the rationalizations we wrap around us to shelter us from the cold facts of life. With the sharpness of a rapier the word of God penetrates the chinks in an armor of righteousness and touches us at the sore point of our human relationships. We try to separate the heavenly life from the life on earth and the Bible sharply reminds us that there is not just one great commandment but two. We try to convince ourselves that it is enough to love Christ and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus; that it is enough to love his church and the other members of our race.

Jesus' Second Commandment

The Bible, however, will not be fooled. It asks embarrassing questions about the state of human brotherhood. It will not be deceived about the size of our church budget, or the growth of our membership, the eloquence of our preaching, or the beauty of our worship. These things are good, and if they show growth, that is fine; but more basic than any of this is that irritating, distressing question that our religion will not let us forget: "How are things between you and your brother?"

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar." That is painfully plain. The Bible has a talent for lucid expression. The author might have said, "If a man says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, the truth is not in him." Or he might have said, "If a man says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he ought to reconsider his religion and indulge in self-examination"; but no: "If a man says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar." Christian love can never forget that it dwells not in isolation but in fellowship.

C. H. Dodd has observed that in the synoptic Gospels the abstract term "love" scarcely ever occurs. He points out that "love" is more often commended by examples such as the parable of the Last Judgment and the Good Samaritan. We cannot love God in the abstract, and the only conceivable proof of its reality is to be found in our love for our fellow man. All our professions of faith, our recitals of creeds, our hymns of devotion and our songs of praise are so many words if they result in no practical concern for our fellows. In comment on our text, Professor Dodd says, "To overspiritualize religion is to weaken it ethically."

The fourth and last thing to notice about Christian love is that it is patient. In his hymn to love Paul points this out and goes on to say that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Christian love can afford to be patient for it centers in a God of love, ever at work in the world of men seeking to quicken in them an awareness of their responsibility for one another. Christian love knows it is not alone in the world, but that it works with—indeed it is the expression of—an everlasting love at work elsewhere in surpris-

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Faith Healing

(Continued from page 5)

to his children?

Little wonder that an ancient Hebrew Scripture declares that the physician is raised up of God for a divinely appointed task of healing: "Honor a physician according to thy need of him with the honors due unto him, for verily the Lord hath created him. For from the Most High cometh healing."

The Prayer of Faith Can Heal

At the same time we witness God's power at work in the prayer of faith. Here is an actual happening. A pastor is kneeling by the bedside of a parishioner whom he commends to the healing power of God. Medical science has despaired of saving the patient's life but the quiet, even-toned voice of the pastor quoting well-loved passages from the Bible, has had a strange and unlooked-for result. The stentorian breathing becomes normal. There are signs that the patient is coming out of a deep coma and returning to consciousness. His will to live is quickened and strengthened. In response to spiritual therapy of Scriptures and prayers, healing forces of unpredictable power are at work drawing him back from the very gates of death. We are reminded of the now-familiar words of Dr. Alexis Carrel: "As a physician I have seen men, after all other therapy had failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer."

One of the unfailing characteristics of the healing ministry of Jesus is that it was directed not to isolated human ills but to the redemption of the whole individual. The entire personality was involved. Said our Lord on one occasion: "I made a man every whit whole."

A serious mistake sometimes made by persons exercising a ministry of spiritual healing is that they are satisfied with the improvement or cure of an individual malady without relationship to the character of the patient. A physical healing may sometimes be accomplished while spiritual ills remain—perhaps deeply rooted self-centeredness or even moral failure. St. Luke, the Greek physician, gives us a typical illustration of Jesus' mode of healing. A woman creeps up behind Him and touches the fringe of his garment. The medical men of her day regarded her illness as a judgment of God. She is branded as an outcast, expelled from the Temple, separated from her family, ostracized from society. In Leviticus 15 her illness is diagnosed. But the doctors of that early period were mistaken. Her illness was not produced by moral wrongdoing. Mark writes that she "had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse." When Luke records the same incident, he is more generous in his treatment of the physicians, but then he himself was a doctor! Luke writes that she "had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed by any one."

When plunged almost into the depths of desp
she hears of the Great Physician. His reputat
as a healer became known throughout the land.
the idea takes root in her mind that if she can
touch the hem of his robe she will be made wh
Resolving to put her hopes to the test, she joins
throng and works her way toward the Master. M
than once, just as she is about to touch him, a su
of struggling humanity sweeps her back. Fina
with a desperate effort, she reaches out a th
trembling hand and grasps the hem of his garme
When our Lord turns abruptly and asks, "W
touched me?" the disciples regard him with
wilderment. They point out that he has b
thronged by hundreds of persons, so why does
ask such a question? He replies: "Some one touc
me; for I perceive that power has gone forth fr
me."

The woman had tried to hide herself because
knew that she had no right to be in that thro
The ban of the medical men and of the church
on her. Now in fearfulness and trembling she c
fesses all to Jesus. His reply is full of reassuran
"Daughter," he said, calling her by that ten
name which would indicate her restoration to Go
family, "be of good comfort, thy faith hath ma
thee whole; go in peace." Here was not merely
healing of a specific ailment but the gift of "wh
ness"—the redemption of an entire personality.

It is time that the Christian pastor recove
from the inferiority complex that too often gr
him when he meets a physician in the sickroo
His function there is as vital as that of the doc
and on occasion may have even more far-reach
results. He doesn't need to stand as a supplicant
the door of the medical laboratory, hoping th
some word of encouragement may be spoken on
behalf. He enters the sickroom in the home or h
pital with quiet confidence, knowing that he
there as an ambassador of the Great Physician w
having commissioned his disciples, sent them fo
to preach and to heal all manner of disease.

Fine Lines from a Prayer

O THOU whom no man hath seen at any ti
we thank thee for the immaterial blessings w
which thou dost visit us; for the eternal things
seen which give our lives quality and meaning.

We thank thee for the love that makes the
timacy of marriage a deep and growing experie
of security and trust. We thank thee for the delig
of parenthood and the privilege of guiding grov
and of sharing outreach. We thank thee for
challenge of work that tests our skill and stren
and relates us most completely to our fellowmer

We thank thee for the beauty of the crea
world and for the beauty of man's design, and
the pure pleasure that this beauty awakens in

For these, and for all the other intangibles t
support us in our daily rounds, we thank thee
Lord. Amen.—*Loring D. Chase, New Canaan C
gregational Church, New Canaan, Connecticut.*

In Obligation to Be Shouldered,
Or an Opportunity to Be Seized?

The High Sense of Responsibility

By William H. Hudnut, Jr.

IN the second year after the Israelites had left Egypt and while they were encamped in the desert of Sinai, Moses felt that it was God's will for him to take a census of all the people, with the exception of the Levites. The members of this tribe were put in charge of everything that was sacred; they were to serve Aaron the priest in caring for the tabernacle, or tent of meeting, and all its appointments. It was their responsibility to carry it and its equipment whenever the children of Israel moved their location; they were to take down the tent and set it up and wherever it was pitched they were to camp around it. Anyone who interfered with their sacred duties was to be put to death.

Within the tribe of Levi the sons of Kohath drew an especially sacred task. Whenever camp was broken, Aaron and his sons would enter the tent of meeting, go forward to the sanctuary, remove the curtain, lay violet cloths over the Ark of the Covenant and the various other sacred belongings, wrap them up in leather and put them on a sort of stretcher for the journey. All of these sacred objects then became the particular care of the Kohathites. So, when the chiefs of the twelve tribes brought their offerings of six wagons and six teams of oxen after the tent had been consecrated, Moses assigned no wagons to the Kohathites because of this special duty of theirs. As the Book of Numbers states it, "To the sons of Kohath he gave none because they were charged with the care of the holy things which had to be carried on their shoulders." They needed no wagons because the objects which were their responsibility were much too sacred to be consigned to a baggage train; they had to be carried by the men themselves.

I

In applying the truth behind this ancient story to modern life let it be noted in the first place that the sons of Kohath did not have to serve, they chose to. They could have requested some other duty; they could, presumably, have demurred. But they did not; they were willing to carry the sanctuary on their shoulders.

The willing acceptance of personal responsibility is always part of God's will for your life. In the service of the Kingdom no men are drafted as unwilling conscripts in a cause they hate; it is always a labor of love. Until a person learns that his rightful responsibilities must be met and chosen, he is simply not prepared to face life as it is. People are adept at evading responsibility these days. Some give as their reason the excuse that good fortune has never been their, that they have not had the "breaks." Their heredity, so they say, was mediocre, their environment was poor, their teachers did not understand them, their friends betrayed them, they lost their money or their health or their dear ones. Whatever the excuse, luck has been against them and they cannot be expected to build responsible Christian character.

There is enough truth in this attitude to make it plausible. One's heredity *is* important, and it is not easy to be an Elizabeth Barrett Browning when one has a paranoiac for a father. One's environment *is* important, and it is not easy to become president when, like Abe Lincoln, you were brought up in the backwoods. On's health *is* important, and it is difficult to conquer illness as did Charles Darwin who, according to his own testimony, was "almost continually unwell"; or, like Helen Keller, to rise above almost insuperable physical handicaps. But who ever said that life is a bed of roses? Every man has obstacles to surmount, and it is how he handles them that counts. To be sure, circumstances are important; to be sure, we all face difficulties; but it is still true that in the really major matters of living our response to life is what we make it, and that is the all-important matter, not the circumstances themselves.

No life need ever be wholly shaped by circumstance. It may be unfavorable, as with John Wesley, who was the fifteenth child of his mother and reared in a poor vicarage, yet nevertheless became one of England's great men. Or circumstances may be favorable, yet who will say that good fortune guarantees good character? Many a privileged life has failed to develop a sense of high responsibility.

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Professor Henry N. Wieman of the University of Chicago once described the efforts of his college roommate to provide himself with exactly the right atmosphere for the pursuit of the intellectual life. His friend, said Dr. Wieman, "procured a large comfortable chair that was thought to be good for study. He got study slippers and a lounging jacket. A book rest was fastened to the arm of the chair to hold the book at just the right angle before his eyes. A special lamp was installed and eyeshade, pencils, paper, and revolving bookcase. He would come into the room after the evening meal, take off his coat and put on the jacket, take off his shoes and slip into the slippers, adjust the study lamp, put his book on the book rest, recline in the comfortable chair with his eyeshade over his eyes and, when everything was perfectly adjusted, fall fast asleep." All of which goes to show, I should think, that in any life the inward, personal response is far more significant than the outward circumstance, whatever it may be.

II

The unshakable truth is that we are responsible for what we are. We cannot assign our characters to the wagons of life nor blame the way we develop on circumstance. Our response to life is squarely up to us; we carry it on our own shoulders, just as those sons of Kohath carried the sanctuary, and we cannot delegate our responsibility for it to anyone else, neither wife nor mother nor minister nor psychiatrist nor teacher nor business associates. Under God we are responsible for ourselves. Far from realizing this, however, many people try to escape the burdens of selfhood by crying: "Life is too much for me, I can do nothing against its titanic forces nor make any contribution that amounts to anything. I am the victim of circumstance, the creature of conditions, driven by the tide of events; whatever happens, I'm not to blame." It is sad to watch this vocabulary of defeat, this conviction of uselessness, this convenient evasion of duty, take possession of a person's life. But it can! It is a comparatively easy process to develop the habit of disclaiming responsibility, of rationalizing failure, of excusing defeat and blaming circumstance or the other fellow. Man's desire to escape responsibility for his own acts is deep seated.

But we are responsible—life proves it again and again. We choose to get up in the morning or to lie in bed; we choose to go to work or stay at home; we choose to be honest or dishonest, thoughtful or spiteful, happy or gloomy. We have power over circumstance, not absolute, of course, but considerable. A story about Lyman Beecher, father of Henry Ward and Harriet, is a case in point. Once he agreed to exchange pulpits with a colleague who was a rigid predestinarian. It so happened that on Sunday morning they passed each other, and the neighboring minister, exulting in this apparent vindication of his narrow theory of fore-ordination, called out, "Doctor Beecher, I wish to bring to your attention the fact that before the creation of the world God arranged that you were to preach in my pulpit and I in yours on this particular Sabbath." "Is that so?" said Mr. Beecher, reining in his horse glaring at the man; "then I won't do it!" turning his carriage, he returned to his own chu

So! God expects us to act like men, not mar ettes; persons, not puppets. Every one of us certain responsibilities before God, and he exp us to carry them on our own shoulders. Your r tion can be mature or it can be childish; the remains that you have a self to create and no least of all God, is going to create it for you. E real self is a true creation; it does not just luc turn up. Too often people make a mess of t lives because they forget the fundamental t that what happens to them is not important, how they respond to it is all-important. No can build a Christian life without carrying its concerns willingly on his own shooulders.

III

Another fact to remember is that a depend Christian person is not only one who takes service of the sanctuary seriously as a responsib that he should not evade, but also one who assu it joyfully as a privilege that he would not wis forego. Life has its obligations and duties, plent them, but the distinctively Christian approac seems to me, lies in lifting duty up into the re of privilege and making what we ought to do a It was the duty of those Kohathites to carry sanctuary; it would their solemn and sacred ob tion. But the way they carried it—as an obliga to be shouldered, or as an opportunity to be se —made all the difference.

It is not much fun to live with the first kin person, the person who regards life as a dull, d weight, a distasteful duty to be done. We all like this at times, I suppose, oppressed by burd grievous to be borne, doggedly bearing them, fee at once sorry for and proud of ourselves, and idly carrying on. A person can spend his life d what he conceives to be his duty, yet for all tha

(Continued on page 25)

Yea We Wept . . .

WE who had drowned the prophet's voi
With songs of glory and ourselves
Plucked on the harp strings
Laughed and played louder
Drowned him out with our strident noise.
Ah, if we only had listened.
With our harps still warm and humming
They took us.
We turned to the weary road
And we heard his voice as they drove us o
Too late, too late we heard and wept.
By the strangers' river we left our harps,
Our tongues of joy, on the willow branches
That they might whisper
To westward winds
The songs of home that we cannot sing
Remembering.

C. P. FREEDMA

In the Midst of Tribulations
God's Love Upholds Us

Full Courage Now

By Mervin M. Deems

Philippians 1:12-20.

LAST year a successful play entitled *The Lark* ran for some months in New York city. It portrayed a perennial theme, Joan of Arc. At almost any given time there is a new book about her, a drama built upon her experiences, or some reference to her. John Steinbeck in attempting to account for this calls it "the Joan in all of us." He points out that miracle piled upon miracle in her life. Not so much the voices for they are not unusual experiences to children. But the fact that a peasant girl should touch royalty, the fact that a girl should not only wear armor but lead an army, the fact that such a girl should be a theologian, at a time when the queen of sciences was jealously guarded by church and university—*these* were the miracles! As Mr. Steinbeck says, "The story of Joan could not possibly have happened—and did." As we feel that since it happened way back there in her, it could happen in us.

But what was it about Joan of Arc that attracts us? Was it her faith? She most incredibly believed, and kept on believing, and surely her faith was contagious. Was it her integrity which outshone her armor? Both of these, integrity and faith, are indispensable factors for our understanding of the Maid of Domrémy. But there was something else, too. In a time of confusion and bewilderment she had one clear goal. In a moment of defeat and despair she imagined victory. When many were hearing various voices, she heard a Voice. And when there was a curious softening of moral fiber, she displayed spiritual courage. She stood alone.

I

There are times when spiritual courage is not only desperately needed but when it is perhaps the one factor that can save us. Recall a stanza from Harry Emerson Fosdick's great hymn:

> God of grace and God of glory,
> On Thy people pour Thy power;
> Crown Thine ancient church's story;
> Bring her bud to glorious flower.
> Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
> For the facing of this hour.

That was written for the dedication of Riverside Church, New York, back in 1930 but its summons to courage speaks to us today.

This is a quality we need at whatever age we happen to be. We try to develop it in the child because in spite of all one can do accidents do happen, and when they do we want our children to be brave. We tell our boys and girls—at least in church school—to be ready to stand alone. We say, dare to be a Daniel; and then all too often later as young men and women, or in middle age, society says, why be different? Why stand alone? Come be one of us, no matter what you once believed. If you want to get on, if you want to get ahead, then do as we do.

If any softening of our moral fiber comes to us today, it will come about in *that* way, not through an all-out attack by some organized evil. And certainly I know no age that more needs what I am talking about this morning than men and women of my age. To have grown up as I did in a sort of Victorian era of middle-class comfortable society, believing that we all inevitably tend toward one unseen, divine event; to see this as the inevitable Kingdom; then to pass through a World War, a depression, and, unbelievably, a second World War; and now when half of life is done to stand on the threshold not of security but insecurity, not of what may be predicted but of the unpredictable; to sense that progress in all its attainment still lacks power to strengthen us within—this makes me cry, "O my soul 'God of grace . . . grant us courage, for the facing this hour.' "

II

Let us say at once that we go beyond a mere grim and stoical acceptance of life in our thinking this morning. To be sure even that is better than running away from life. So much of our experience today might be called "living on the brink or can-we-get-through-this-day" sort of living. Our lives are surrounded by modes of escape, so that we do not have to confront that harshest of all facts ourselves. Some of us spend our days hoping—just hoping—that things will get better: that peace somehow will be made; that prosperity will continue into security; that overnight, somehow, we shall triumphantly lose our prejudices. We don't care to ask ourselves

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how these things may be for that would mean some sort of resolution of spirit, some confronting of ourselves and our world.

Set over against *that* a person whose life is a sum of losses and tragedies, but who resolutely says, "My head is bloody, but unbowed," or who says, "I thank whatever gods may be,/For my unconquerable soul," and you are one level up on the person who has not even *that*. There is a certain stalwart persistence here that we all admire, especially the young people among us. But what I am talking about is vastly more than that.

Paul said it in five words: "Full courage now as always."

III

Consider first that full courage arises out of one's trust in God. One day Jesus came to a fork in the road, a parting of the ways as he journeyed. One way led to Galilee, and so to comparative safety. The other led to Jerusalem where, since he had already antagonized religious leaders, he could expect only trouble, possibly disaster. The words which describe that momentous decision read, "He set his face to go to Jerusalem"—not in desperation, surely; not in grim determination, knowing he was right, but because God loves us, and since he does, nothing can really harm us.

So Paul, writing to the Philippians, declared "I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ . . . with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body."

To be sure we can stoically accept the fortune of our days as they come, and try not to break. Many people mistake that for real courage. But a Christian, not fooled by thinking he is stronger in life —knowing that, in spite of his sin, God loves him, in spite of his fear, God will keep him—rests his case there and so comes to know the meaning of full courage.

IV

Observe further that such courage rises above surrounding limitations. Paul was under bonds when he wrote those words. He was in prison. He was far away from the beloved friends and church to whom he was writing. The uncertainty of the next hour was his in a peculiar way. But in spite of this—and knowing Paul we might almost say *because* of it—he wrote of "full courage even now, imprisoned as I am, insecure as the next hour threatens me."

I remember a Christian home in Chicago where I had been asked to call: a mother and father of modest circumstances; three children, one of whom through leukemia was doomed within weeks, perhaps days; but the mother and father carrying on the life of the home as though everything were normal. Full courage now!

V

And observe that such courage preaches Christ. That's what happened in the praetorian guard. Paul wrote, "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advan the gospel, so that it has become known throughou the whole praetorian guard and to all the rest th my imprisonment is for Christ." What a way meet what life sends us—so that people can sa "I saw the gospel, I saw Christ again through you

Meanwhile, none of us can know how the issu before us will turn out. This *is* a perilous time. N one in his senses would deny that. But we can brin to our time the sort of courage derived from Go rising above our limitations, whatever they are, an expressing the spirit of Christ.

Memorial Day Prayer

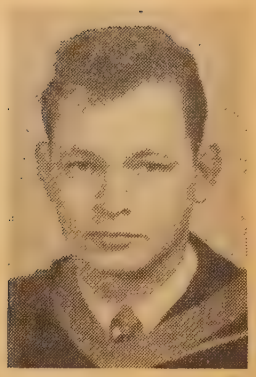
WE invoke thy Spirit upon our assembly, Lord, that we may do honor to those wh have fallen in battle. We acknowledge the hero sacrifices which have been so that we may enjo a government of our own choosing, the secret ba lot, trial by jury, freedom of speech, of publica tion, assembly, and best of all the freedom to wo ship thee in ways best suited to our needs.

Make us ever mindful of the widows and orphan of those who have died. May we not forget tha this is the price of war and the irreparable damag to human society. Let us not accept without stricl ened conscience the staggering cost of war. Teac us how much good this money spent in raising th standard of living among underprivileged peop could do to inspire faith and hope in the world.

Help us, O God, to make this Memorial Day day of reflection, a time of recounting how d pendent we are upon others, our too easy accep ance of the struggles and sufferings in our behal most of all how to make our peace gains perma nent. We know that thou wouldst have the membe of thy world family live in harmony and brothe hood, for thou didst not make us for strife an destruction of human personality. Divest us of ou prejudices and hatreds toward other nations an races. Increase our faith in the United Nations an may it ever keep the doors open to internation cooperation. Help us share our national wealth an the opportunity within our country so that hop will rise in the breasts of the countless millions wh are crying for friendship and freedom. Thus w not these honored dead have died in vain.

Bless the President of these United States, mem bers of Congress and our ambassadors and ministe in other lands. Be with our state and local officia who day to day make their valuable contributio to the common welfare. Raise up from among us, ou Father, capable, consecrated, public servants wh will lead us from war to peace, from tyranny justice, from division to unity, from discriminatio to brotherhood. We ask all these favors with th forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ ou Lord. Amen.—*Given at Community Memorial De exercises of Cranford, N.J., by Albert Allinge minister of the Cranford Methodist Church.*

Beyond the Pain of God's Wrath
Is the Joy of His Love



The Power of God

By John Mason Stapleton, Jr.

I Kings 18:20-46.

I DON'T know what you make of this story of Mount Carmel. Maybe it's saga or legend, an exaggerated telling of some event that was not so extraordinary in its original setting. But whatever the story is, as we now have it, its message puts in sharp outline something that is happening around us all the time, at every moment of our lives. It's the story of a battle, if you will—God's battle with us. The battle is cosmic in scope and all nations and all people are in the thick of it, whether they know that fact or not. To put the matter more bluntly, we have in these verses the clear statement of our defeat as we set ourselves up against God. Therefore, it is the proclamation of his victory from which not one of us can escape.

Now with that as our background, I want to lay hold here of two main facts in this story of Elijah and the pagan prophets of Baal; namely, the stark, naked powerlessness of all other gods, and the power of the one true God, the God of Israel, the God of the church, your God and mine.

I

First, the powerlessness of the other gods. They were all there that day. The men of Baal to begin with. They said that Baal was the god of fertility. He controlled the weather which gave rain to nurture the soil. And from the soil came food and from food life. Ultimately then, they believed, the control of death lay in the hand of Baal. And there had been no rain. The earth was dry, scorched to hard crust and the plants were withering and food was becoming scarce. There was nothing now to be done save to call in god Baal to solve the problem. "But Baal won't do," protested Elijah, the prophet of God, and he had called them to Mount Carmel to make the test; in plain language, to have a showdown. So the Baalites began their festivities. They danced and sang, and sang and danced. Primitive rhythms mounted in their speed and fury. Voices cried louder in volume and higher in intensity, "O Baal, answer us; O Baal, answer us!" Emotions increased in their fury. Now they were cutting their veins with swords and knives to let the blood run. And the blood ran and the voices cried out even louder. Their extravagances got completely out of control. But, as if it were reporting the sound of a dull ax on rotten wood, the scripture says, ". . . there was no voice; no one answered, no one heeded." The earth was *still* dry, scorched to hard crust, and the plants were still withering, and food was still not to be had.

Is it any wonder then that this story fights to grip our imaginations? As some dark mystery, some dreadful burst of truth, it frightens us, drives us away, only to find us peeking around the corner at it because we can't stay away. For we know that, if we only dared to be honest with ourselves and admit it, here *we* are with *our* gods, our shouts and cries boiling in the depths of our emotions. Here we stand, crying to our *false* gods and there is no voice! No one answers and no one heeds!

The message is one of doom and history validates it—to me at least. The Greeks had their gods. Zeus, they said, was the boss of them all. Nobody in his right mind would claim now that he sits in the high places to hurl the thunderbolts which crash over our heads. They said that Caesar over the Roman Empire constituted a kind of "national eternity." Caesar might die, they argued, but always another was there to take his place, until, that is, the hordes from beyond the border sacked the "Eternal City" in 410. Or consider our more recent background, beginning with that period of history the historians call the Renaissance, the "rebirth of man." God was something you could take or leave. A few hundred years later the Enlightenment picked up the chorus. Here God sat on the edge of the universe like a football coach, while the players, men, performed on the gridiron of history. This divine coach gave no advice, did not withdraw or replace any players. He simply sat on the bench, perhaps not even watching the game. Sin became an outmoded concept. No one needed God's grace, and prayer was a waste of time! It wasn't long, then, until some hero looked up to mop his brow, cast his eye toward the bench and yelled, "Hoorah! He isn't there any more." And there went out a report that day through all the land, and many rejoiced that God had disappeared!

So now *man* was god. Or, at least, he could make his own gods. Which *still* made man god! "Glory to

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man in the highest," said Swinburne, "for man is the master of things." He ran the whole gamut of his desires and experiences—usury, lust, power, money, prestige, sex, ambition, knowledge, everything else from super TV to dishwashers and beauty contests. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that all these things are wrong in themselves, but they have been used by man as the fulfillment of his *own* desires, to the advancement of his *own* power, and the splendor of his *own* glory.

So quite rightly we can say that what confronted the prophet of God that day on Mount Carmel is still here. The reality of the false gods continues a reality and, make no mistake about it, their failure to *do* anything is still real. Man by making himself God has discovered that he is the sorriest god of all. Trying to look for his soul in a test tube or a sociological analysis, he can't even *define* himself as other than mostly water, with threads called nerves, capable of being dissolved in the twinkling of an eye. He seems to be caught in vast and strange forces over which he has no control. The result is that he often seems to be of no value or use to himself because there is no God who loves and cares for him. Life doesn't seem to be worth much because there is no eternal life, though some still argue to the contrary. The words to describe man's moods are not pleasant. We've heard them until we cringe at the sound, but they must be faced: despair, disillusionment, depression, hopelessness, despondency, desperation, history a wild chaos that doesn't make a *dab* of sense.

Playwright Tennessee Williams writes of parties in the big city: "Horror of *not meaning* overhangs these affairs like the cloud of cigarette smoke and the hectic chatter. And the horror is about the only thing that's left unsaid."[1] Or Christopher Fry's character in *A Sleep of Prisoners* says it in a different way. He's dreaming and in his dream he talks to the fish: ". . . fish, fish, fish in the sea, and I am salt and sick on a raft above you, wondering for land, but there's no homeward I can see."[2] Perhaps I can sum it up best if I recount an incident out of my brief pastoral experience. I walked up to the bed of a hospital patient one day. He knew I was a chaplain there. One of the first things he said was, "I'm an atheist. Oh, maybe not strictly an atheist. I suppose something made the world and keeps it going. But, mind you, nothing more." Then suddenly this man, so outwardly brave and self-sufficient, who had put God out of his life, threw his hand over his eyes, and he was crying! Do you get the pathos? No one answered, no one heeded. Blackness as dark as night, and silence as heavy as death.

That's the challenge God throws at your feet. Set yourself your little false gods beside the great issues of life culminating in death and see how they stand up! Strip that almighty, real God in Christ down to a Grand Perhaps, as Rabelais put it, and you find a world where life is a nasty game and where, therefore, to die is of no use at all! Or don't even be that dramatic. Just take your work as your god and see how good it is when the company leve its retirement plan at you. Make a god out pleasure and find how well things turn out whe you have to stop your intake of pork and sweet and even sex is a thing of the past. Make a god ou of your children, only to find them gone one day an your work over. Rear up the church as god until splits, or the members bicker among themselves, an you wonder why you ever had anything to do wit it! Or make a god out of power until you find you self too old to be powerful anymore; a god out money until you realize that, hackneyed as the ex pression is, you "can't take it with you." Will yo discover that aching void where there is no voice No one answers; no one heeds. Blackness as dark a night, and silence as heavy as death!

II

Some would call this fate, some dark power tha thwarts and frustrates man's energies, however no ble and however good. Others take a brighter vie and call it freedom—freedom from everything ab solute, from any superior power which issues claim upon man's life, in short, freedom from God. Bu to dismiss the truth of the other gods is not enough It's just *not* that easy. Maybe we wish it were!

You have to go on to the second main fact: th power of the true God, the God of Elijah, our God Elijah didn't flinch from the test of that God ther on Mount Carmel. In contrast to the extravagance of his opponents, he set about to make his prepara tions too. He commanded an altar of stones to b built and placed the offering of an animal upon i The rest of the details aren't too important. Suffic it to say that, when the proper time came, th prophet called upon the God of his fathers, Abra ham, Isaac and Jacob. "Answer me, O Lord," h said, "answer me, that this people may know tha thou, O Lord, art God . . ." The fire from heave descended, consuming the offering and the altar stones. God was at work to show his power. But th power was shown as concerning itself with mor than fire from heaven and its consumption of anima sacrifice and stones. The primary concern of th power was with people.

On the one hand, we see it in destruction. Elija said. "Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of ther escape." And they seized them; and Elijah brough them down to the brook and killed them there. you were of the same opinion as I when you read heard this story you were quite ready as God fearing people to accept the power of God *until* came to the ruthless slaying of the prophets of Ba in cold blood. Then you winced a little. But as considered the matter further, I came to see tha you really can't separate the sufficiency of God fro the fate of those prophets of Baal. That sufficienc just will not fit into our neat little schemes and con ceptions of what God is.

The Bible understands God's power as somethin more than a glorified aspirin tablet, for example, t soothe jaded nerves or a divine buffer to offer us som special security against the insecurities of life. Go is surely the one who says, "Come to me all wh labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you res

[1]Tennessee Williams, "The Timeless World of a Play," introduction to *The Rose Tattoo* (New York: New American Library, 1955). Used by permission.

[2]Christopher Fry, *A Sleep of Prisoners* (London: Oxford, 1951). Used by permission.

Without a doubt he renews our strength that we may run as eagles and not be weary, walk and not faint. But no biblical soul ever sees that rest and the renewal of strength until he understands the danger in it first. In the Bible, and now, at *this* hour, the Lord God is one who has a controversy with his people. "You only have I known," he says, "therefore I will punish for all your iniquities."

The traditional symbol in Christian thought for this controversy and punishment, generally, is the wrath of God. This wrath is not a simple, childishly selfish anger, but the conflict of a divine unswerving righteousness with everything that is against it. The biblical writers saw it as the tearing up and inevitable destruction of sin and evil at their roots. And no one gave it such force as Paul. Said he: ". . . the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men . . . God gave them *up* . . . because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen."

So beware now, that *you don't explain away the tragedies of history too simply.* It's the easiest thing in the world to lay the blame for the misery and unhappiness in human life upon some faulty factor in our environment, as bad training by parents, raw deals, a wrong start, the shortcomings of our fellow men. Wars are blamed on the bungling policies of political leaders, the selfishness and ambitions of other nations. But, listen. Who lets the misery and unhappiness flourish? Who sets the natural consequences which spring from our sin and the sin of others? Who *acts* to allow a war? Could it be that so much of the heartache, the useless suffering, the pain which could have been avoided—could it be that these are realities reaching back into the mind and heart of God, because the man he created flaunted his God-given freedom and worshiped himself, so giving up his God for lie? Could it be that man thumbed his nose at the righteousness of God and God gave him up because that divine righteousness cannot stomach his meanness, blasphemy, sin and deceit? Could it be that that righteousness makes *demands* which we ignore at our peril? Studdert-Kennedy saw it. A chaplain in England during the first world war he wrote:

> I am not indulging in fancy when I say that I have seen God standing there time and time again, pointing his loving but relentless finger to the man at my feet saying, "*That* is what it means. That is what 'business is business,' that is what 'free and unfettered competition,' that is what refined materialism and Godless prosperity *really* mean—that boy with the swollen, shapeless face, with the great hole in his head and the brain tumbling out—*that* is what they really mean. This is the day of judgment!"[3]

"Do not be deceived," said Paul; "God is *not* mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Sow the seeds of hate, selfishness, lack of love for your fellows and trust in God, but what you sow you *shall* reap, watered, sustained and nurtured by the wrath of God. Those "shadows of human history," some poet mentioned are truly shadows, but remember they are the shadows of God!

[3] *The Best of G. A. Studdert-Kennedy* (New York: Harper, 1948), page . Used by permission.

No wonder that as the Son of God breathed his last breath on the cross there was everything but tears and wailing and hopeless lamenting. *Not* weakness, *not* defeat, but *fear* was the watchword there. The Gospel writers paint a graphic picture for us. The sun goes behind the clouds and darkness falls over the face of the land. The veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom and the multitudes flee to their homes, beating upon their breasts. The centurion, symbol of the whole might of the Roman Empire, stands at the foot of the cross and with every nerve taut and icy chills running over his body cries: "Truly this was a son of God." There was the wrath of God made plainer than ever before. There was the person of God himself set against you and me, we who have exchanged the truth for a lie!

Terror? Yes! A situation from which to flee? Yes! But beyond the wrath there is something more and greater. You get a glimpse of it when Elijah says to King Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of the rushing of rain." It's another way to see the power; for this was the same, the very same, power seen once in the wrath now working in an act of saving love. And maybe that's the reason why this *frightful* God keeps drawing us back with some irresistible attraction. Maybe we creep back under his shadow because we know that when all is said and done he is a God to be reckoned with, who has no tin cup to rattle for our condescending offerings and service, and that, ultimately, this is the only God we could really be satisfied with. Maybe there's something about his holiness which grips us because it's always good, always true and just. Perhaps we keep praying to, thinking about, and worshiping him because through him and the power of his love *and* wrath we know what it really means to be persons, and are challenged to be, with his help, the kind of people he intended for us to be.

So that beyond the pain of his wrath is the joy of his love. And all we have to do is to accept it, believe it, *take* it as a free gift. "Go up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of the rushing of rain." Out of the terror, the complete destruction of the false gods, rain was coming to drench the earth—water to nurture the dry ground so that the plants could grow and food would be a blessing for all. And when the veil of the temple split and the sun faded from the sky and the people ran frightened to their homes, the scene was set for the new Christ, the *resurrected* Christ. Present with us in the spirit, he will march with us down the long year, bringing hope out of despair, joy out of sadness, peace out of turmoil, life out of death, until he come again and make complete his glory in God's new heaven and God's new earth.

"Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up. Eat and drink; for there is a sound of the rushing of rain.' So Ahab went to eat and to drink!"

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O thou who art the Lord of our lives, grant us, through the abundance of thy grace, the courage to face thy judgment, and a higher courage to accept thy love. Amen.

A Sermon for Mother's Day

Call Her Blessed

By Philip Gordon Scott

Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also and he praises her.
Proverbs 31:28.

MARY Ellen Chase speaks for us and for the story of our own childhood home when she writes of her early days in Maine:

> Many years ago, when I was a child in Maine, our large and rambling white house was surrounded by a long white picket fence. . . . At the entrance to our driveway the fence was broken by a white gate, which swung inward or outward as necessary to allow for our comings-in or goings-out. . . .
>
> The most clear and lasting impressions of my childhood are related to this gate, which both sheltered and extended the small, tight world in which we lived. Behind it, our driveway moved past our house and toward the barn . . . filled with the smells of hay and of kindly animals in their stalls and with the sound of pigeons . . . Before it lay the country road, which ran downhill toward the village and the sea and uphill toward the sky. . . . This road was, to me as a child standing on the white gate, next to the weather the most thrilling thing I knew.
>
> If I looked behind me, there was the sureness of my home, a safety which lay warm and comfortable somewhere deep inside my pinafore. . . . But if I stared before me, beyond the pickets of the white gate, what excitement might not be coming or going along that road between the sky and sea?[1]

Symbol of Security

This day, in our remembrance of our families and mothers and childhood homes is a day devoted to the white gate, and all it shut in fast and tight, and all it opened on—out on adventure, in on security and love. It is hinged on home.

I don't know what your private symbol is of that same sureness, and the double gift of the gate—courage and comfort—faith as trustful venture, and faith as refuge and retreat. But I am sure it goes back to an earlier day; I am sure that like the gate it is hinged on home.

It happens that this week, being a practicing grandfather as well as a minister interviewing for our educational staff work, I have had my own recollections reenforced by the trip back home to the house which they say I entered at the age six months, and left, I suppose, when I went college or maybe for my first job away from hom the summer before.

Our house, too, had a side gate. The gate shu with just enough sound, short of slamming, so th every entrance and exit is announced by a du thud. I still remember my embarrassment in a ver early grade in public school when, during som woolgathering after lunch, I heard a sound whic seemed to me like the closing of that gate. Alou in the silent classroom, I asked, "I wonder who coming in?" Everyone glared at me. The teache told me to keep quiet. I was and am ashamed. Bu it was a perfectly sensible reaction for my min to make. My thoughts had taken me home.

Mine was a gray gate. But behind the gate wa defense from threat; out from the gate adventur invited. Through the gate came visitors who woul widen the world of the family into new stretche of strange experiences and new scenes.

Whatever your symbol of such secure and affe tionate grounding of life, and its opening out on th new, in trying things, and testing things, and trus ing the unfamiliar, this is part of the furnishin of home. That is what we are saying today, a knowledging in memory and purpose the whit gate, and the hands which held it open, or helpe keep it shut.

Celebration of Remembrance

Part of the way we celebrate Mother's Day sug gests to some that it is a kind of purge, working o in sentimental gifts the guilt and the burden of ou neglect and conflict, ridding ourselves through i ritual of our regret and of our painful childhoo memories. But it belongs to the things we do whic explain ourselves to us and to others. It is really holiday about successful families, where, as Eliza beth Janeway says, "growing up is not only possib but usual," and we see not only the agonies an absurdities that we insist on acknowledging s boldly in these times but all that lives and las through our love.

Foundations of faith lie here, and of fear, an the beginnings of our capacities to live and to liv in love. The sound of the gate as it shuts behin you, shutting out the world's too-muchness tha you can't sort out yet, or assemble in any patter

[1] Mary Ellen Chase, *The White Gate—Adventures in the Imagination of a Child* (New York: Norton, 1954). Used by permission.

PHILIP GORDON SCOTT, *pastor of Westmoreland Congregational Church, Washington, D. C., holds degrees from Hamilton College and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. A native of Mt. Vernon, New York, he has served pastorates in New Haven and Darien, Conn., and in New York City.*

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Georgia Harkness

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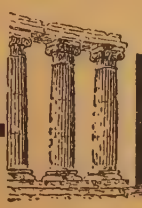

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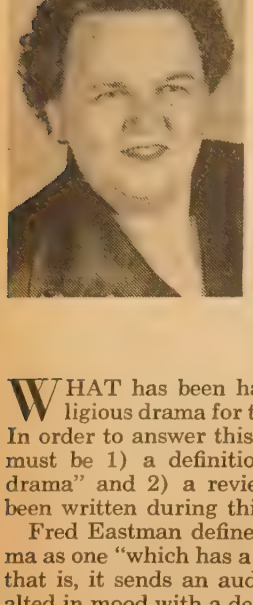

The Play's the Thing

Drama in the Church

By Mildred Hahn Enterline

WHAT has been happening in religious drama for the past decade? In order to answer this question, there must be 1) a definition of "religious drama" and 2) a review of what has been written during this period.

Fred Eastman defines religious drama as one "which has a religious effect; that is, it sends an audience away exalted in mood with a deepened sense of fellowship with God and man." [1]

Harold Ehrensperger elaborates on the subject: "When the artist succeeds in segregating a small part of his life struggle into the compass of a climax situation, we have a play or drama. If this drama comes alive before a participating group as audience and gives that group motivation for action that sends it out to live effectively in spite of its human weakness, if it truly 'catches the conscience,' then the play is of religious consequence." [2]

The past ten years have seen many plays with spiritual struggles, individual and social, of "worried" times. These plays have presented problems honestly and courageously with spiritual insight of the Christ. For the purpose of watching the Christian conscience onstage, a review of plays and playwrights from 1946 to 1957 will prove that "the play's the thing."

1946-1948

The 1946-47 season was a season of revivals on Broadway. It was the season of *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller and *The Iceman Cometh* by Eugene O'Neill. It was the season of distinctive musicals like *Finian's Rainbow* and *Street Scene*. In 1947-48, likewise, theater showed much more progress than the New Stages' production of *The Respectful Prostitute* would have audiences believe. Jan de Hartog's story of refugees, *Skipper Next to God,* Sidney Kingsley's *Command Decision,* and Robinson Jeffers' *Medea* qualified for great religious drama. *Allegro* by Rodgers and Hammerstein was the *Our Town* of musical comedy. Its sermon is succinctly preached by a Greek chorus of townspeople and by projected mods and scenes. The 1946-48 period on Broadway was truly productive of dramas with ideals.[3]

But what plays were "catching the conscience" off Broadway? The 1946-48 years began an era of *Names* onstage in church drama. In America, Fred Eastman edited *One-Act Plays of Spiritual Power;* in England, Richard H. Ward of the Religious Drama Society wrote *Figure on the Cross*. Christmas inspired Martinez Sierra's *Holy Night* and Stephen Benét's *A Child Is Born*. Churches produced widely the plays of Dorothy Clarke Wilson, Esther Willard Bates and Marion Wefer. Two important anthologies appeared in 1947-48: *A Treasury of Religious Plays* by Thelma Brown and *Fourteen Plays for the Church* by Schenkhov and Jurgenson. Both of these books have a permanent place on the shelf of good religious drama in every library.

In this brief period of three years, the conscience of the theater was "pricked" to the "sticking place." On and off—Broadway, the still, small voice of religious drama continued to be heard.

1949-1952

The public, for the most part, wanted plays on the lighter side in 1949 and 1950. However, *Country Girl* by Clifford Odets brought into relief the high moral standards of Georgie Elgin who will not forsake her husband, and *Darkness at Noon* by Sidney Kingsley revealed the other side of the iron curtain. The 1951-52 season was another dreary one for serious plays on Broadway. Two plays stand out: *The Shrike* by Joseph Kramm and *Billy Budd* based on Melville's novel. Daniel Blum of *Theatre World* remarks, "All in all, it was not a season to look back on with much relish on Broadway."

While Broadway was feeling its way through a dark era of theater, there was light in other places. Laurence Housman in England contributed to good theater with his choice selection of *Old Testament Plays* (1950). The following year, Christopher Fry, through encouragement of the Friends of the Canterbury Cathedral, wrote *A Sleep of Prisoners,* one of the outstanding pieces of religious drama today. Written in poetry, the play bases its outline on Old Testament biblical stories which soldiers of World War II interpret in their own lives as they hide in the ruins of the old cathedral. Only one prerequisite is necessary for appreciation of the play, namely, that audience and actors know their Bible. *A Sleep of Prisoners* is great religious drama.

Perhaps the most realistic writer of religious plays is Dorothy L. Sayers. Church players have found great inspiration in both reading and producing episodes from the life of Christ in *The Man Born to Be King*. Dorothy Sayers writes of orthodox theology in brisk and vigorous terms but never vulgarizes her subject. She declares: "The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama."

Thus, while Broadway theater was loudly dancing and tripping in the dark, drama in the church was quietly moving ahead in the light of good writing—with something to say.

1953-1957

Broadway did not say much beyond box office appeal in 1953-54. T. S. Eliot brought forth *Confidential Clerk,* which Broadway garbled into a frenzy of illegitimate children. Broadway spurned Gian-Carlo Menotti's musical religious drama, *The Saint of Bleecker Street,* and Christopher Fry's *The Dark Is Light Enough*. One of the humanely religious experiences that Broadway did accept was *The Flowering Peach* by Clifford Odets. A story of Noah in realistic lines, the play is re-enforced by thrilling Alan Hovhaness music. It was not a commercial success.

In 1956 on Broadway *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett was an encouraging piece of thoughtful writing. His very human tramps satirize and symbolize church people today: Vladimir, the poser; Estragon, a normal person, bewildered with life. Both tramps are seeking salvation through Godot (God). Buffeted by Pozzo (worldly power), the tramps never do find God. The play poses the old question of Job: "Where can I find Him?" After church dramatists surmount difficulties of style, they will find this play rewarding. An all Negro cast produced the play in New York in January 1957.

With Mrs. Eugene O'Neill's consent to publication and production of her husband's autobiographical play, *Long Day's Journey into Night,* church people will think and pray. Its frank admission and raw exposure of human frailty in a family speak loudly. Here is a play which every reader and every theatergoer will act with the characters, somewhere in the performance.

The most remarkable development in religious drama during these last three years comes from off-Broadway writings for on-Broadway players. The Broadway Chapel Players of the

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[1] Fred Eastman, *Christ in Drama* (New York, MacMillan 1947), p. 129.
[2] Harold Ehrensperger, *Conscience on Stage* (Abingdon, Nashville), p. 30.

[3] The big flop on Broadway was the religious drama, *Dear Brutus,* Myerberg's dramatization of Jeffers' poem.

MILDRED HAHN ENTERLINE *here offers a summary and revision of her book* Best Plays for the Church *(1952). Another book by her is* Directing Church Drama, *and during the entire summer of 1957 she will be doing just that at the American Baptist Assembly Grounds, Green Lake, Wisconsin. Mrs. Enterline is an instructor in speech and drama at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania.*

Broadway Congregational Church, New York city, are Equity actors who experiment professionally in the local church and on the road. Notable performances have been Obey's *Noah* (1954), Percy's *In April Once* (1955), Rutenborn's *Sign of Jonah* and Fry's *Thor, with Angels* (1956)

Seminary Classes in Drama

Another encouraging note is the presence of E. Martin Browne at Union Theological Seminary, New York. There he is conducting classes and experimenting with religious dramas like Phillips' *Christ in the Concrete City*. His production of the *York Nativity Play* at Christmas received favorable comment from Brooks Atkinson of *The New York Times*.

The most important book of religious drama, published in 1956, was *Great Christian Plays* edited by Theodore M. Switz and Robert A. Johnston (Seabury Press, $7.50), containing acting versions of several medieval plays.

Across the nation amateur groups are producing good plays in the church. For example, the Park Avenue Players of Christ Church Methodist does an excellent program of plays each year in New York. Negroes in Big Bethel Church, Atlanta, Georgia, stage a morality play annually on large scale. The Pilgrim Players of California have a semiprofessional touring company. In Texas, Baylor University has sponsored demonstration plays and workshops in local churches. The Wesley Foundation and Scarritt College in Nashville, Tennessee, write and produce many experimental dramas. Realizing the importance of trained leadership in dramatic production, the National Council of Churches sponsors an annual summer religious drama workshop. In past years this was held on the American Baptist Assembly Grounds at Green Lake, Wisconsin, but in 1957 it will be held (July 20-27) at Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Illinois.

This kaleidoscopic review of ten years points to one conclusion: Religious drama is growing in interest for both the professional theater and the church. In the over-all picture of religious drama today, however, there is one quality lacking—the majesty or reverence of the Greeks. Playwrights (with the exception of Fry, perhaps) are experimenting with form, which calls attention to itself and places *God* second. In production, too, there have been extremes. Passion plays, in general, have sold their birthright. But audiences are most at fault. People still need the Greek cleansing of emotions; yet too often congregations see drama in the church as only a medium for escape or entertainment. Playwrights, players and audiences should recall the Psamist's lines: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!"

Development of appreciation of the best in religious drama among church people is needed. When only the best is good enough for church and church people, then *best* plays for the church will be a reality.

Responsibility

(Continued from page 12)

very far from anything approaching Christlikeness, for that means joy and radiance and a sense of high privilege. Doing one's duty is no guarantee against a biting tongue or unlovely thoughts or a censorious temper or a haughty disposition. As a matter of fact, doing one's duty may be accompanied by a feeling of pride and self-righteousness which is wholly incompatible with the spirit of Jesus. The Christian life is never simply an obligation to be shouldered but rather a privilege to be enjoyed. It does not really come to pass until it is carried beyond the realm of duty up into the realm of privilege.

One memory we all have in common is the memory of teachers. Consider those you have known: It is not true that some of them were actuated merely by a sense of duty? Day after day they plied their conscientious round, dull, drab and commonplace. I recall being invited to luncheon years ago by a teacher of this type, and how disillusioning it was to ask him a question about our class and have him reply, "Oh, let's not talk shop." He thought of his teaching as a duty to be endured and not as a privilege to be prized.

But other teachers we have known have been motivated not so much by a sense of duty as by a sense of creative opportunity, and one thinks of them with a thrill. They positively enjoyed their teaching. They welcomed questions, made time for personal interviews and spent hours talking with fascinated students who dogged their heels. Reinhold Niebuhr has been a teacher like this for thirty years; teaching for him has never been an obligation but always a privilege. No man is a real teacher (or a real doctor or lawyer or father or husband, for that matter) until he has won through to a sense of privilege. Similarly, no man understands Christianity until it has ceased to be a duty he wants to avoid and has become an opportunity he is glad to assume. Of course Jesus was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief; but preeminently he was a man of joy who brought good cheer and radiant courage to people oppressed with the duty side of life. "Above and beyond the call of duty" is truly a Christian motto.

Responsible people, then, are those who feel the duty of the first mile and the privilege of the second, and require more of themselves than is expected of them. Their lives are given meaning by their devotion to causes greater than themselves; their habitual thinking is in terms of how and where they can serve; and they are interested not so much in what they can get out of life as in what they can bring to it. They specialize in the voluntary assumption of loads no one could expect them to carrry. They bear the burdens of others, and so fulfill the law of Christ. The service of the sanctuary is theirs; they bear it on their shoulders.

This basic approach to life outlined in the story of the sons of Kohath is still valid. There are still many matters that need our individual support; without it they will fail. A responsible Christian takes the service of the sanctuary personally; he realizes that he cannot bypass it, that he cannot delegate anyone to meet his own indebtedness to God. None of the great causes in life like the church, brotherhood, integration, world peace or social righteousness will go forward as they should unless we personally see to it, unless we carry them on our shoulders and make them come alive. They cannot be assigned to the wagons of life; we must have a sense of personal responsibility for them. Machinery and organization may be all right as far as they go, but some things cannot be handled in this way at all. Were they consigned to the wagons, they would be shaken to pieces; we must bear them on our shoulders!

There is a tremendous need in our world for people who are eager to think, work, suffer and sacrifice for Christ, people who have the courage to say of some great cause of his, "Here, this is my affair!" The slums of Chicago are still far from redeemed, but they would be infinitely worse now had not a girl named Jane Addams said in 1889, "Here, this is my affair!" The treatment of women in our prisons is not yet perfect, but whatever advances have been made began a century and a half ago with a fearless, intelligent, responsibly-Christian woman named Elizabeth Fry who dared social ostracism to attack the unspeakable conditions in English prisons and say of them, "Here, this is my affair!" We all know how much still needs to be done before the Negro in America becomes a first-class citizen and is treated in a democratic, let alone a Christian, way; but whatever progress has been made is due very largely to brave and incisive Christian thinkers like Elijah Lovejoy who, back in the 1830's when it was most dangerous to be connected with it, said to the cause of abolition, "Here, this is my affair!" Just 120 years ago Mr. Lovejoy was killed by a mob out near Alton, Illinois, rather than be false to his faith. People like this who identify themselves with something beyond themselves show responsible Christian character; they realize that life's great causes always need personal attention.

Like it or not we are passing through a transition stage in history and the global problems arising from our complex international, economic and racial relationships will never be solved by machinery but only by people with a sense of high responsibility who are willing to wrestle with these problems unceasingly and give of themselves unstintingly. A sense of personal obligation for the welfare of others is about the noblest quality a life can have. God grant that there may be many of whom it can increasingly be said: "The service of Christ's Kingdom is theirs; they carry it on their shoulders."

For the Minister as . . .

Evangelist

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by Samuel M. Shoemaker

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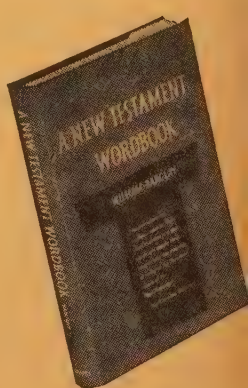
by William Barclay



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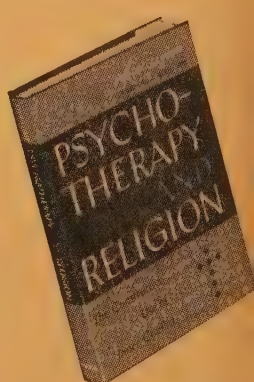
Counselor

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND RELIGION

The Constructive Use of Inner Conflict

by Henry Guntrip



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Student

YALE AND THE MINISTRY

by Roland H. Bainton

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Among Us—

Where is Character Built?

By Murray A. Cayley

When and where is splendid character built?

This was the question which engrossed me as I left General Charles I. Carpenter's office in Washington one morning last August, for I had just been given disturbing information about the conduct of our overseas troops.

With three other Protestant ministers I was headed for a two month preaching mission to American soldiers stationed in the Orient and had gone to the office of the Chief of Chaplains of the Air Force for my first briefiing. There we were told quite plainly that we would find nagging moral issues wherever we went.

It was pointed out to us that in the Orient prostitution and narcotics are not only legal but conveniently accessible; that there is a constant assault made upon character by the age-old barracks room ballads of the aggressively immoral men; but there was also the counter conviction that a boy's character is formed back home before he ever gets into uniform.

Effective Chaplains

I hasten to add that the picture proved to be not entirely bleak. I was impressed by superior work being done by our Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish chaplains throughout the Orient, as well as by the grave and sensitive concern of the top command for the total welfare of our men and their families when they are abroad.

Excellent facilities have been made available to the troops: splendid institutional chapels and Sunday School buildings; gymnasiums; do-it-yourself workshops, libraries; service centers; as well as recreational programs and university extension classes.

I was fascinated by the ambitious projects undertaken by our forces to aid orphans and natives suffering typhoon damages and from almost every conceivable situation where Good Samaritanism could be practiced. One colonel held "sick parade" for Korean children every afternoon after school so that they could have their scratches and bruises swabbed and bandaged.

Even so, it was impossible not to be impressed also by the disappointing moral climate. How depressing it was to walk along the street of brothels near one base and see the G.I. traffic there; to be aware of the 115 arrests in one village on Labor Day; to spend many hours talking with boys imprisoned in Army stockades; to have endless counseling sessions with soldiers and their families dealing with every conceivable kind of heartbreak.

Reams could be written on each of these items, but rather than to go on and on, I come back to the original issue: When and where is splendid character built?

Home Responsibility

Back home again I face a shocking sense of responsibility, for the answer seems inescapable: Moral character is built here—in our homes, in our churches and in our schools. Both psychology and religion agree that character has its foundations laid in childhood.

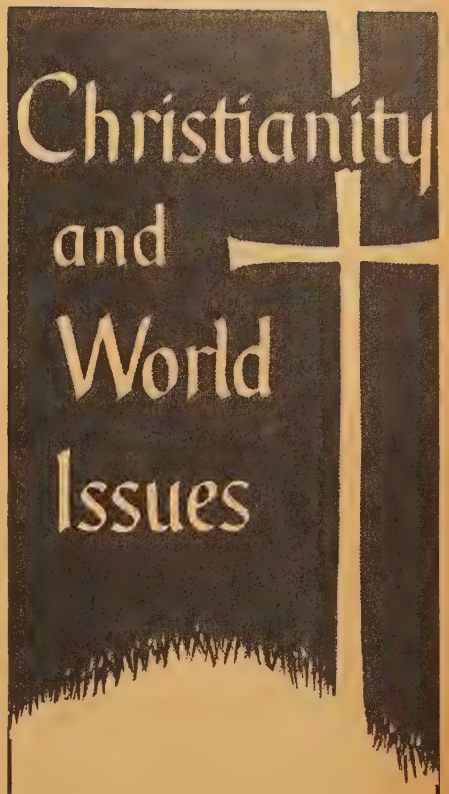
A young man's basic character, moral idealism and integrity do not suddenly begin to take form at the age of 18 with the help of a uniform and strange surroundings. This new situation merely challenges what character he already possesses. Yet there is a gravely depressing lack of unified assault upon the problem by all of the character-forming media of our society. It is ironic that we can consolidate to build the means of destruction but not to build character.

From the limited vantage of a little-known pulpit I cannot sound much of a call, but someone needs to do it. I can only pray God to make me more effective in my preaching, counseling and visiting right here at home, for our own character building program needs strengthening.

My director of religious education complains that he cannot get a corporal's guard out to a church P.T.A. meeting. But surely the parent-child-teacher relationship has some bearing on character. I must urge our parents to put other social "obligations" second to that.

Recently I urged members of the

MURRAY A. CAYLEY *was one of four Protestant clergymen who spent September and October, 1956, on a preaching mission to air force bases in Japan, Korea, Okinawa, Formosa, the Philippines and Hawaii. He is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Rochester, New York, and is chaplain and member of the faculty of the Rochester Institute of Technology.*



by T. B. Maston

What contributions can and should organized Christianity make to the solution of the problems of the world?

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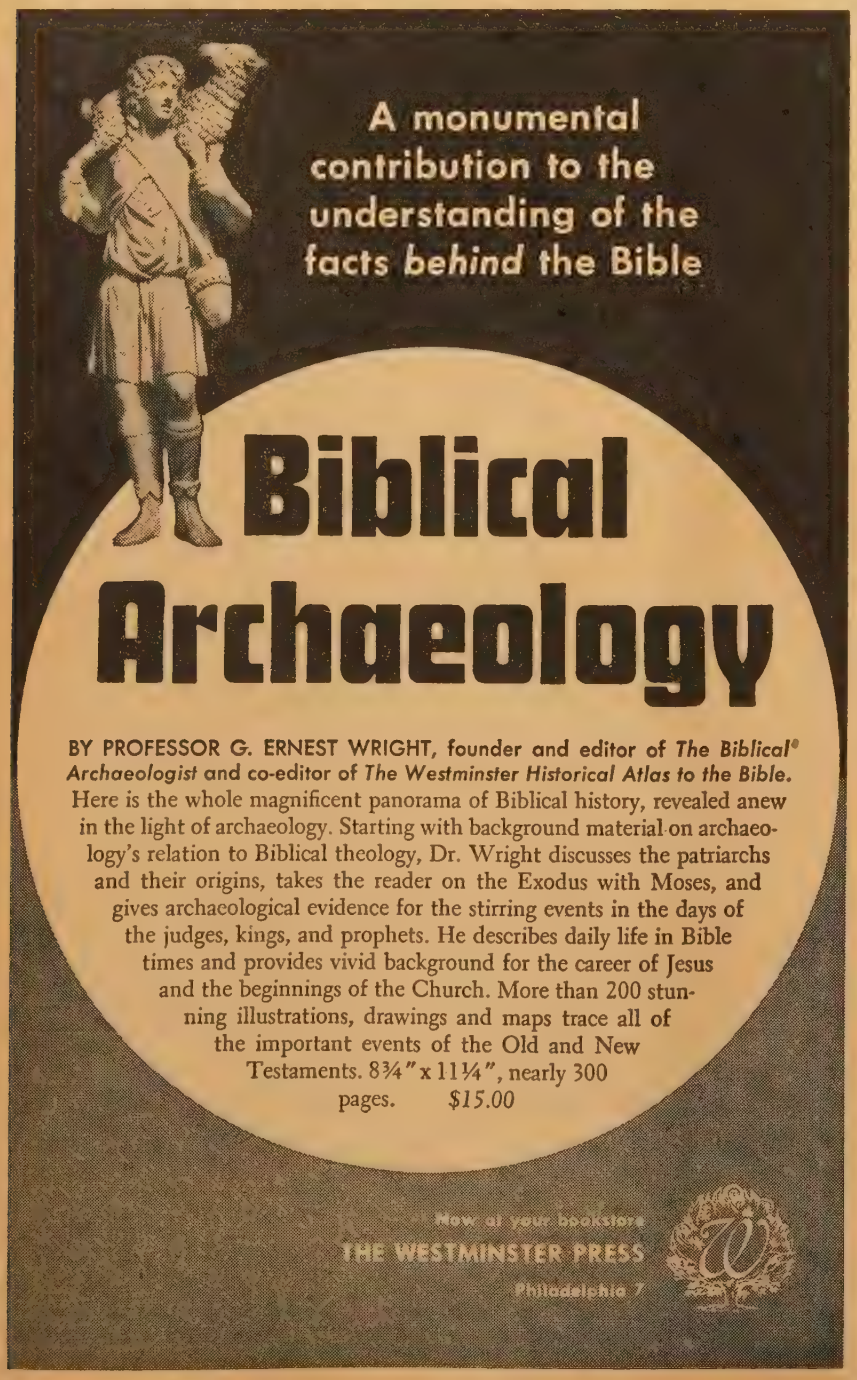
congregation to volunteer as babysitters so that some of our young parents could come to choir rehearsal, but one woman said to me, "Who said we had to have a choir?" Surely Christian associations and character have some relation even to choir rehearsal. Therefore I must determine to tell the good news of the beloved fraternity more winningly for we've somehow fallen shy of building a redemptive society around here.

Practicing Ideals

I have pleaded with the congregation to use their cars for Christ on Sunday, before and after services. This must involve character. But one wife and mother said, "My husband would raise the roof if he ever caught me using our car for taxi service." Surely children learn to choose or reject Christian ideals as they see them practiced, or rejected. Therefore I must make my pastoral calls more helpful toward the development of spiritual attitudes.

Last month I went with a young lad to visit the superintendent of schools. The boy had been expelled. Could he, under any circumstances, be taken back? No he could not! Character was certainly involved here. Therefore I must try to find time to get closer to these youngsters in the parish so that they will come to me *before* the point of no return has been reached.

The Kindom of God is not here yet, brethren. We must work the works of Him who has sent us while it is day. It would be much more comfortable to blame someone else for our deficiencies here at home—especially if those someones were the prostitutes and dope pushers of Fukuoka or Nung Dung Po safely around the other side of the globe where they cannot argue back.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PULPIT POST

He Misses Enslin

SIRS: As a long-time reader of The Pulpit I regret exceedingly the discontinuance of Dr. Morton Enslin's column. I usually read it first as a tune up of my fiddle strings for the spiritual music in the rest of the magazine.

Dr. Enslin's column was not only "baptized iconoclasm," it was divinely ordained iconoclasm. After all, Jesus was no novice as an iconoclast in his day.

We preachers are so accustomed to after-church compliments that we are afraid to speak our minds. I'm going to miss the gloriously irritating proddings of Dr. Enslin.

EARL A. BLACKMAN
Longview Chapel
Lee's Summit, Mo.

Votes for the Prophet

SIR: My vote for the outstanding minister of the year will go to the Itinerant Prophet who gave us his views in "Visiting Fireman" in the February issue.

He was completely Christian in understanding that the "entertainers" do want to care for a visiting pastor properly. He was also completely human and right in the very fine suggestions he made for the church to follow.

I am presenting this article to my board. I wish it could get to all such boards.

DAVID MCGREGOR
Cumberland Presbyterian Church
Cleveland, Tenn.

He Takes Exception

SIR: I have been a subscriber to The Pulpit since my graduation from Yale Divinity School in 1936, and I am still irked when you publish a sermon like the very recent one by Charles Crowe ("A Durable Faith" Jan.) in which the preacher borders on the libelous in condemning a contemporary scholar; in this instance, Theodore Brameld of New York University.

It was obvious that Crowe had not read Professor Brameld's recent book "Toward a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education" (Dryden Press). Apparently he has relied heavily on a review of the book that appeared in *Time* last July.

I feel that you have a responsibility when you publish sermons to demand an elemental honesty. Let the preacher discuss a scholar's ideas and creative opinions. If you disagree with a scholar *after having read his works* or studied under him, then do it with Christian charity. Dr. Crowe presents a distinguished scholar as a menace to America in personal terms that are entirely uncalled for.

ROGER J. SQUIRE
First Methodist Church
Red Bank, N. J.

Book Reviews

IN BUT NOT OF THE WORLD. *By Robert W. Spike, Association Press, 110 pages, $2.00.*

THERE is, apparently, an inevitable time-lag in the process of getting scholarly theological insights into actual practice in local parish churches. For more than half a generation the theological position which, for want of a better name, is called "neo-orthodoxy" has been taught in the seminaries. Now at long and welcome last the implications of these insights are being brought to challenge the practices of the local church. It is a development that some of us have longed for and now greet with joy as the dawn of a new era of Christian significance in the local community.

Mr. Spike's incisive and exciting book applies theology to practical churchmanship. Describing the doctrine of the church under the headings of "Koinonia," "the Body of Christ," and "Where the Word is preached and the sacraments administered," Mr. Spike presents the implications of these doctrines to the specific ways in which local churches operate. The preparation of persons for membership, the missionary enterprise of the local church, the educational program and the worship of the local church are subjected to stimulating examination. The methods and objectives of evangelism and the local church's responsibility to its total community are given equally careful analysis in the light of the theological premises of the Christian faith. Mr. Spike's linking of social action and intercessory prayer as equally part of the church's responsibility to its community seemed to this reviewer a touch of genius.

The thesis of this book, which contains a number of provocative descriptions of specific parish situations, might be summarized as making the local church theologically honest. As Christian ministers and Christian laymen begin to apply the theology being taught in the seminaries to the practices of the local church, more and more such books will, and ought to, be written. Of such, this will surely remain one of the best.—*J. G. Gilkey, Jr., Bethany Union Church, Chicago, Ill.*

REVIVAL TIMES IN AMERICA. *By Fred W. Hoffman. Wilde, 189 pages, $2.50.*

EVERY historian should work with a minimal palette of black, white, and gray. Fred W. Hoffman writes as a revivalist preaches, in black and white only. He fails to deal with the gray of moral complexity. There are good men and bad men, good opinions and bad opinions. To change the bad the churches need prayer, power, and personality (he is an advocate of the "great man" school of history). Out of this combination comes revival, which is the pathway to American survival against atheistic communism and internal infidelity. Then, as Dame Julian would say, "al shal be wel and al manner of thyng shall be wele."

We are in the midst of a revival right now, says the writer. He documents this, for example, with occasions when "the Holy Spirit came down" on student bodies at such citadels of learning as Ben Lippen School, Multnomah School of the Bible, and, more importantly, Wheaton College. According to Hoffman, the personality of our time, God's "chosen vessel" to spread revival fires in the traditions of Edwards, Whitefield, Finney, and Moody, is William Franklin Graham, a Wheatonian himself. Hoffman's portrait, needless to say, shows no gray in Graham. —*M.E.M.*

THE CROSS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. *By H. Wheeler Robinson. Westminster, 192 pages, $3.00.*

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1717 — Two Hundred Forty Years — 1957

discussed texts may have changed the three to four decades since Rob son's works were first published, his style and intuitive exegesis timeless in appeal.

Robinson stresses continuities tween the two testaments, finding cross in the Old Testament less in lit al rhythms of prophecy-and-fulfilm than in the enduring problem of div love and human suffering. To him Book of Job is a "first draft of gospel story" revealing one who bor cross of some sort of cosmic significan In Isaiah the Servant of Yahweh p figures Jesus of Nazareth and Eternal God in His sacrificial sufferi Jeremiah through his own experie introduces us to the New Testam mystery of the cross.

Less concerned with the diverse li of interpretation of theories of the cr than with historic realities, Robins quotes Browning (and, I'm sure, so w wise preachers who buy the book) the "authentic sign and seal of G ship" with its "rage to suffer for ma kind" and thence to rise through p to "joy, more joy and most joy.' *M.E.M.*

NO CROSS, NO CROWN, A STUDY THE ATONEMENT. *By William Wolf. Doubleday, 216 pages, $3.*

THIRTY years ago H. Whee Robinson wrote, "There is an eff wrought on men by seeing the Cr and seeing it in the light of its histo which is largely independent of precise theory of the value of the s ferings." Yet precise theories pers Vincent Taylor, Martin Jarrett-Ke

Pulpit Calendar

May 5—2nd Sunday after Easter.
May 6-12—National Family Week.
May 12—Festival of the Christian Home (Mother's Day).
May 19—4th Sunday after Easter.
May 26—Rural Life Sunday
May 30—Ascension Day. Memorial Day. Day of Prayer for Missions.
June 2—Sunday after Ascension Day.
June 9—Whitsunday (Pentecost). Children's Day.
June 16—Trinity Sunday.
June 23—2nd Sunday after Pentecost.
June 30—Independence Sunday. Nature Sunday.
July 4—Independence Day.
July 7—4th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 14—5th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 21—6th Sunday after Pentecost.
July 27—7th Sunday after Pentecost.

Leonard Hodgson, and Gustav Aulen are among the moderns who have elaborated atonement concepts. Wolf criticizes neither their precision nor their theorizing but only their tendency to make exclusive claims for the theories they champion. His own important book will help restore the cross in its full splendor to a central place in Christian preaching; indeed, it bids for a place with the better studies of the atonement in our time.

Wolf's importance consists in his willingness to present the happily cluttered biblical complexity without seeking false and superimposed unities. Each theory, says the author, seriously distorts the scriptural truth the moment it is offered exclusively. He ingeniously lets Aulen refute himself on the question of the adequacy of the classic view. The sacrificial understanding (Hick, Quick, Thornton, Taylor) is largely acceptable and seems to have a great future; Wolf's argument against it—it is difficult to communicate—is hardly adequate. He also seems to assume that the moral-influence theory is largely passé and spends too little time refuting it. In sophisticated theological circles it *may* be passing, but it persists in many a pulpit.

What is left? "How can a God of holy love accept sinners without destroying his holiness or sentimentalizing love into an immoral indifference to wrong? This question is the fundamental one for every theory of atonement." All the New Testament writers point to the cross of Jesus Christ for the answer. If there is one common metaphor it can be expressed in the title of books by William Penn and William Wolf, "No Cross, No Crown."—*M.E.M.*

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